

439 *Axe and hoe blades, blankets, cloths, clothing, cutlery,*
 THE OVIMBUNDU UNDER TWO SOVEREIGNTIES

438 drinking-mugs, lanterns, metal plates, pens, pencils, wine, and writing slates are bought from the traders. Axe and hoe handles, buckets, bedsteads, beer, bows and arrows, chairs, fish-traps, mats, mush sticks, pottery, pounding-blocks, stools, tables, and small metal objects such as knives are made by Ovimbundu and may be sold locally. To this local trade may be added the selling of pieces of meat by anyone who has killed a pig, or gone hunting and killed a duiker. Very occasionally somebody who has bought cloths in a town or has some hand-made object superior to the local average may tour villages selling his goods as a pedlar.

439 The only trade which at all recalls the days of the caravan trade is the cattle trade with the Kwanyama Ambo. As in the rubber trade the Ovimbundu make use of their intermediary geographical position. They obtain from Luanda shells called *olomande* (singular *omande*). One of these shells costs 10 escudos (2s. 6d.) at Luanda and ten of them will buy a beast in Kwanyama country. Alternatively 30 rounds of tobacco will buy a beast there. I knew several men who had made, or planned to make, trips of this nature. The analogy with the caravan trade

[438] breaks down, however, when the relative importance of the two is examined. The caravan trade determined the economic standards of the Ovimbundu, absorbed a great part of the time of every able-bodied man and youth, and influenced every aspect of Umbundu life from the foreign policy of the kings to accusations of sorcery; the cattle-keeping is relatively unimportant economically since the Ovimbundu do not drink milk, and eat meat, even chicken or pork, very irregularly, nor does the occasional sale of cattle to traders altogether balance their uncertain survival away from their indigenous grasses.

[262] The real importance of cattle in the economy seems to be as a form of capital investment for spare savings, an investment which can be liquidated either by sacrifice on ceremonial occasions or back into money by sale. Socially, it may be thought of as marking the survival of the Umbundu capacity and enthusiasm for trading in an age when the economic situation has closed the old routes. Indeed, perhaps the sub-conscious motive for the Ovimbundu who trade is to show that they can act outside of that economic framework of cultivation